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 Programs to Educate All Cyclists & bikeprogram.org
 Michigan Mountain Biking Association & mma.org
 Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance & michigantrails.org

Revise Michigan's Right Turn Signal

Action

Michigan bicyclists request that the Governor and Michigan Legislature:

- **Add a provision to the Michigan Vehicle Code (MVC) allowing bicyclists to legally signal right turns using an extending right arm pointing in the same direction.**

Status

HB 4866 was introduced by Representative Anthony Forlini on 6/20/13 and referred to Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. Co-sponsors include Representatives Bruce R. Rendon, Gretchen Driskell, Scott Dianda, Tom Cochran, Martin Howrylak, Andy Schor, David Rutledge, Bradford C. Jacobsen, Jon Switalski, Peter Pettalia, Eileen Kowall, and Marilyn Lane.

Issue

In Michigan, bicyclists have all the same rights and responsibilities as motorists, including the obligation to signal turns. Since most bicycles are not equipped with turn signals, bicyclists use hand signals to notify other roadway users of their intentions.

Currently, the Michigan Vehicle Code (MVC) states that bicyclists must indicate a left turn by pointing to the left with an extended left arm, while a right turn, is to be made with an upturned left arm. These hand signals carryover from a time when cars did not have electric turn signals. They continue to make sense today for motorists without functioning turn signals, as a driver cannot feasibly point out the passenger side window to signal a right turn in a similar fashion to how they would a left turn.

For bicyclists, however, an upturned right arm is not the most intuitive way to signal a right turn, and in fact is often mistaken by drivers for a friendly gesture.

Sec 257.648 of the MVC states, "When a signal is given by means of the hand and arm, the driver shall indicate his or her intention to . . . turn [right] by extending his hand and arm from and beyond the left side of the vehicle . . . [with] hand and arm extended upward."

At least 32 states allow cyclists to signal right turns with their right hands. None of the states who have made this simple update to their vehicle codes have stricken the upturned arm method however. This is important since thousands of out-of-state cyclists come to Michigan each year who may only know the universal upturned left arm signal that is currently legal in all 50 states and exclusively required in 18 states, as it is in Michigan.

The Michigan cycling community asks that the MVC be updated to legalize the actions of the many cyclists who already instinctively point to the right without penalizing current law-abiding cyclists who use an upturned left arm.

Pointing to the direction you wish to turn is far more intuitive for both bicyclist and motorist. According to a study by Drury & Pietraszewski, the bent left arm signal was correctly perceived by 65% of drivers, but the straight right arm signal was perceived correctly by 78%. Not only is it safer and more intuitive to point in the direction you plan to turn, but the right arm signal is also easier to teach children: "Point which way you intend to go."

Hand signals are one of the most efficient forms of communication while biking. They help prevent crashes with other bicyclists, motor vehicles and pedestrians, and help bicyclists feel more comfortable and confident on the road. Clear communication via hand signals also helps alleviate the confusion and frustration often experienced by automobile drivers sharing the road with bicyclists.

